

Day 7: Effort**Read:** 1 Corinthians 15:58; Colossians 3:23

The final characteristic that **we see Nehemiah model** is **effort**. Nehemiah was a man who put all he had into the project that God called him to do. You can see this modeled in Nehemiah 2:18, and also in 4:17. Whether it was starting the building project or arming themselves to defend their city, Nehemiah modeled effort and led his people to live that way, too.

Look at what Paul wrote in Corinthians. He challenges us to “give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.” This is not talking about pastors or other paid workers in a church. This is a rallying cry for every person that follows Jesus, to labor for Jesus with passion, knowing that your efforts are never in vain.

In Colossians, Paul makes sure that we realize that everything we do in our day should be done to honor Christ. This takes effort and it takes a vision of living passionately for Christ. He says “whatever we do” - not just at church, not just when people are watching and not just when it is easy. Anything we do should be done to bring glory to Jesus. This takes effort and shows the world our commitment to God - a commitment that Nehemiah modeled and also a lifestyle that he challenged his people to embrace.

Day 8: Wrapping it all together - ‘Building your gate’

As you look at the life of Nehemiah, always remember the GATE acrostic modeled in his life:

God/prayer
Attitude
Tools & materials
Effort

Nehemiah had a vision for what God wanted to do in him and through him and this GATE strategy helped him succeed for God. Thousands of years later, the same strategy can work in your life. Remember some of these key verses and concepts as you allow God to change you as a result of studying the life of Nehemiah:

1. He was a man of prayer...and a man of action: Nehemiah 2:4 & 4:18
2. He had a vision...fighting for the sake of people he loved: Nehemiah 4:14
3. His strength came from the joy of living for God: Nehemiah 8:10
4. He would not be distracted from his mission: Nehemiah 6:3

**May your life also be full of prayer (and action),
 may you catch God’s vision for your life,
 may your strength come from the joy of Christ, and
 may you never be distracted from the mission that God has for your life.**

HAMMERTIME



April 22/25, 2010

TO HELP YOU NAIL DOWN TRUTHS IN THE BIBLE

This special edition of HAMMERTIME is designed to help you study the book of Nehemiah over 8 devotional times.

It may take you longer than a week - take your time and ask God to guide and teach you as you study.

One of our goals at Bethlehem is for you to spend time with God daily - this **HAMMERTIME** Card can help. It is designed to help you spend 15 minutes (or more) with God, 4 days a week. Here is an example of how to use this card. Study notebooks are available in the Bethlehem lobby.

Read the Bible verses (4 minutes)

- Read through one time, then re-read and underline any key points.

Read the card/think about it/write in your notebook (6 minutes)

- Write down some of the main ideas from the passage.
- Write down a “key for me” that is your main point that day.

Pray (5 minutes)

- Write down some of the things you are praying about that day.

Based on Gerald Kennedy’s message, “Build the Gate”, at Spring Momentum 2010.

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Day 1: Nehemiah Overview**Read:** 1st 6 chapters of Nehemiah

Yes, that is a lot to read - but it will be worth it! To get the most out of these 8 days of studying Nehemiah, try to get a general understanding of what happens in this real life story. Of course you can read the whole book, but at least the first 6 chapters will give you a good idea of what happens in this man’s life.

It all starts when Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and it broke his heart. Imagine being far away from the people you love and hearing that they are in danger and their homes are in ruin. This need compels Nehemiah to pray and to prepare for action. Eventually, he leads his people through a building process while enduring opposition, distractions, discouragement and threats. He keeps his focus, sticks to his strategy and leads his people to a place of victory and celebration - through a project our men’s ministry is calling “Build the Gate.”

In these 8 days of study you will learn about the power of prayer, having an attitude that expects success, using the tools and materials that God gives you and giving an effort that honors God and leads to victory. Enjoy the study!

Day 2: Man of God, Man of Prayer **Read:** Various passages in Nehemiah; Philippians 4:6-7

Check out each of these passages in Nehemiah and match them up with the situation that Nehemiah was experiencing.

1:4	When he needed strength
2:4	Asking for God's blessings
4:4	Reaction to bad news
6:9	Time to make the most of an opportunity
13:31	Time of opposition

We all experience those situations at different times in life. If you combine Nehemiah's commitment to prayer with Paul's word in Philippians, you can see that building the habit of prayer in your life is a vital step to experiencing God's best in your life.

Day 3: Attitude, Part 1 **Read:** Proverbs 16:3; Philippians 2:3-8

God shaped Nehemiah and made him into a man that could be used by God for great things. An important part of that shaping was **in his attitude**. You can see four ways that God did this - check out two of these today.

1. **Expecting Success:** Read today's verses in Proverbs and Nehemiah 2:20. There is a big difference in wanting success, even hoping for success - and expecting that God will help you succeed. The important part is to have goals and plans that please God - and having an attitude of expecting Him to help you pursue them!

2. **Servant Attitude:** Read the verses in Philippians and Nehemiah 5:16-18. Nehemiah served his people by not accepting privileges that most leaders would take - he was a servant leader! Jesus modeled this for us perfectly and commands us to live the same way.

Day 4: Attitude, Part 2 **Read:** Proverbs 16:18; Hebrews 12:1

3. **Humility:** Similar to the servant attitude that you read about yesterday, but even more than just serving people, this is a perspective on life where you ruthlessly avoid being prideful and follow the humble example of Nehemiah. First, note in Nehemiah 2:4-5 when he speaks to the king with an attitude of humility. He knew who was in charge and how to treat him. In the verse in Proverbs, note how God warns you about pride...it leads to destruction! If your heart is not shaped in Christ-like humility, you are heading for a fall.

4. **Persistence:** So many times in life it would just be easier to give up on a project, lose interest in completion or just lay down and quit. But look how Nehemiah felt about quitting in 6:3 - "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down." He would not be distracted and he would not give up. See how this is described in Hebrews: "run with perseverance." God knows life will try to beat you down. Don't give up - your persistence will take you towards the finish line.

Day 5: Tools & Materials, Part 1 **Read:** Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:11; Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:12

For **Nehemiah** to become the man that God wanted him to be, he **had to use the tools and materials that God gave him** (see Nehemiah 2:7-8). This took an awareness of those tools, training with those tools and of course, frequent use of those tools. The next two days, we will look at the tools and materials that God sends your way for you to use.

1. **The Bible:** The inspired Word of God is an incredibly important tool in your life. The verse in Hebrews talks about the Word being living, active and sharp - it can literally cut you to the heart and shape you more into the likeness of Christ. When you memorize verses and concepts from Scripture (Psalm 119), it helps you remember what God says and can aid you in the battle against sin. Nehemiah knew God's Word and it was a valuable tool in his hand & in his heart.

2. **Friends:** God wants you to surround yourself with some friends that can help you in your spiritual journey. The Proverbs and Ecclesiastes verses talk about the value of these type of friends. They can sharpen you and help you be more effective and they can lift you when you stumble or fall down. Nehemiah needed friends in his life to help him become all God wanted him to be.

The tools of God's Word and godly friends are vital to have in your life. Build the habit of studying the Bible regularly, especially if you can discuss it with some of your friends. Consistently invest in a few key friendships and lean on them to help you as you strive to live for Christ.

Day 6: Tools & Materials, Part 2 **Read:** Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 1 Corinthians 2:16

Let's keep looking into the **tools that God gives us to help us** on this spiritual journey. Nehemiah was wise to realize that the people working on rebuilding the walls were going to need a variety of tools - some to build and some to defend. You can read about these in Nehemiah 4:13-18. Here are two more tools that God wants you to realize daily:

3. **Your Church:** God has given you the great gift of a church body to be a part of. In Hebrews it talks about meeting regularly with those in your church and one of the reasons is for encouragement. You need people to cheer you on, build you up and hold you accountable to what God is doing in your life. In Acts, we also see the variety of benefits of being actively involved in a healthy church (relationships, serving with others, giving and receiving generosity, etc.). Just attending a worship service once a week is not enough - be proactive and find out what else God has for you in a church body.

4. **Christ:** Don't overlook the obvious - Jesus lives inside of you and should be a powerful part of everything you do. Read about His Spirit in you and the opportunity to really think like Jesus in today's verses from Corinthians.